

# Students as Test Makers in Spanish as a Foreign Language: Initial Insights for Teacher-Student Collaboration in Test Constructions

**Leonardo O. Munalim**

([Lomunalim@pwu.edu.ph](mailto:Lomunalim@pwu.edu.ph))

School of Arts and Sciences- Philippine Women's University, The Philippines

---

## Abstract

For so long, tests have been teacher-generated. Hence, an intact group of Medical-related university students were asked to design original test types as part of their final written exam in Spanish 2. The study aimed to analyze the features of these student-constructed tests. The identified corpus-driven elements were the language of the directions; the test types; the language of the tests; the lexical bundles/n-grams; and the artistic, creative, and visual elements. Results show that English is the main language of the test directions; translation, matching type, and puzzle are the top three test types; English is the overall language of the tests; “mi nombre es” and “cuál es el” are the top two Spanish lexical bundles; and limited images show the students’ artistic side. Overall, these patterns demonstrate the students’ language ability, knowledge of, exposure, creativity, engagement, and manipulation of Spanish that is (almost) foreign to them. Implications and research trajectories offered can go beyond the scope of Spanish teaching-learning process.

---

## 1 Introduction

Tests have a number of pragmatic uses and functions. They are used to diagnose students’ weaknesses and strengths; assess progress; assist in evaluating achievement; choose and modify instructional levels; evaluate syllabus and effectiveness of teaching; and evaluate overall educational programs. Tests have also an effect on curriculum change, teaching and testing methods, redefinition of language knowledge, narrowing linguistic knowledge, and admission criteria (Bachman, 1995; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Douglas, 2010; Shohamy, 2006). Shohamy (2001) also asserted that tests are powerful in gate-keeping, selection, ethnic cleansing, controlling and defining knowledge, and limiting entrance of immigrants and potential citizens.

In the attainment of these functions, however, tests for so long have been teacher-generated. This established practice of testing may have so far lacked a foundation in considering the important part of the students in language learning, testing, assessment, and evaluation. For instance, McNamara and Roever (2006) argue that “language tests for a long time ignored the social use dimension of language and followed traditional psychometric methods of measuring isolated pieces of grammar and vocabulary knowledge” (p. 2). Arguably, teacher-generated tests are considered teacher inward-looking, thus have overlooked the need for the teachers to tap the students’ knowledge of the language, skills, and even creativity in test constructions. Therefore, the takeaway of this paper is the possible desideratum of teacher-student collaboration in (language) testing.

Collaboration in test constructions, however, may not be considered a new research enterprise. Historically, Bachman and Palmer (1996) listed their fourth philosophy of language testing, that is to “humanize the testing process: seek ways in which to involve test takers more directly into the testing process; treat test takers as responsible individuals; provide them with as complete information about the entire procedure as possible” (p. 13). Collaboration may also relate to what Alderson, Claphman, and Wall (1995) claimed that testing has to undergo “innovation... precisely to avoid any fossilization of the test, with the predicted undesirable consequences” (p. 228). These assertions were put forth about twenty-four years ago. More recently, Lewkowicz (2000) posits a different construct of collaboration by allowing the students to be part of the language testing process through the concept of authenticity.

To the knowledge of this author, their insightful ideas (cf. Alderson, Claphman, & Wall, 1995; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Lewkowicz, 2000) have not been continued in recent studies, especially in the teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language in the Philippine context. There is an edited book on collaboration in language testing assessment (e.g. Tsagari & Csépes, 2012), but the articles heavily focused on the macro-level and national policies in testing. Hence, the aim of this study was to describe the corpus-driven features of the students’ constructed tests. The identified corpus-driven features are: (a) the language of the directions, (b) the test types, (c) the language of the tests, (d) the lexical bundles/n-grams, and (e) the artistic, creative, and visual elements.

## 2 Literature review

This exploratory paper that moves a step forward for teacher-student collaboration test constructions is grounded on the interlarding concepts of testing as a social, classroom action; humanistic language testing; and affective filter and emotions in testing, which occupy the ensuing paragraphs.

Testing as a social classroom action may be considered too powerful on the powerless students. Tests are “imposed on all students in all schools, with no way of resisting them” (Shohamy, 2006, p. 93). Shohamy further crystallizes that “test-takers develop a fear of tests, as they feel that they have no control over their behavior as they are in the hands of the tests and testers” (p. 103). Consequently, the power of testing as a social practice has inexorable effects on the students’ consciousness (McNamara & Roever, 2006). These effects include, but are not limited to, high affective filter, negative emotions and anxiety while taking the tests. For example, these effects are perhaps most prevalent in South Korea because of the culture of “testocracy” (Sorensen, 1994, p. 16).

Thus, quelling power dependence of testing may be achieved through a humanistic language testing approach. The idea of providing the students the chance to design their own tests may echo Douglas’ (2010) assertion about the need for “language testers to respect for the humanity and dignity of the test takers by respecting person’s needs, values, and cultures in the provision of language testing” (p. 12). Douglas’s (2010) seventh principle also states that “language testers in their societal roles shall strive to improve the quality of language testing, assessment and teaching services, promote the just allocation of those services and contribute to the education of society regarding language learning and language proficiency” (p. 12, citing [iltaonline.com](http://iltaonline.com)).

If the humanistic dimension of testing is observed through teacher-student collaborative test constructions, then students’ high affective filter, negative emotions, and anxiety while taking the exams will be alleviated. Arguably, asking students to construct tests can increase the flow of motivation to absorb more of the language input. As what Dewaele (2017) surmises, anxiety could also inhibit language and language production. Krashen (1982) historically put forth that the students’ affective filter should be lowered in order to increase high motivation, self-confidence, and low anxiety in the context of learning so that the comprehensible input is reached at the language acquisition device (cf. Assaf, 2008; Benesch, 2012, 2017; Loh & Liew, 2016; Shohamy, 2006). Arguably, allowing the students to answer the tests they have constructed could pique their interests, thereby reducing high affective filter while answering the tests.

Teacher-student collaboration in test construction is intuitively appealing. In fact, tapping students as test makers and/or test collaborators is anchored on the notion that no one way to design a test (Cheng & Fox, 2017). If teachers would want to be cognizant of the students’ preferences in

tests and in learning language in general, they should also devise tests that are modeled from the students' preferences. This needs analysis (cf. Douglas, 2010) and the process of deciding what and how to test, may be the most important contribution this teacher-student constructed and/or student-constructed tests can offer. Knoch and Macqueen (2017) also claim that regardless of the approach in instruction, assessment is ubiquitous in the language teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, the proposal for student-constructed tests may also sit well with Cheng and Fox's (2017) notion of "student-conducted assessment methods that directly involve students' participation in the assessment process" (pp. 76-77). Cheng and Fox move to say that "it is important to recognize that the more our assessment practice directly involves our students, the greater the probability that our students will develop increased awareness of their learning progress and take responsibility for their learning. When students take ownership of their learning, when they want to learn, they are able to learn more effectively" (p. 77).

However, there are caveats to consider in student-constructed tests and/or teacher-student constructed tests. First, collaboration may sound a crossover of the major practice in testing and evaluation. Second, it is given that the students are not fully aware of the "operationalization of outcomes, concept, competence, skills" (Cheng & Fox, 2017, p. 103) and other domains relevant in test constructions. Nonetheless, collaborative and co-constructed tests are innovative if our goal is also to include the social dimension of testing and test construction in the teaching-learning process. This innovation does not harm students' learning and teachers' teaching processes, but can be both empowering and insightful for both parties, if we argue that language testing is a collaborative effort.

Likewise, the tests that the students construct can provide important insights for teachers in terms of students' language levels and abilities, knowledge of, creativity, engagement, and manipulation of the target language. For example, Douglas (2010) noted that "the heart of the matter in language testing is developing tasks that will elicit language performances from which we can infer levels of language ability" (p. 48).

### 3 Methodology

The student test makers who produced the test types came from an intact group of students officially enrolled in Spanish 2. There were 7 males and 17 females, a total of 24 students. Upon checking, it was found out that there were 2 males and 3 females who did not attempt to answer, thus resulting in only 19 students who successfully carried out the "Creativity Challenge." These students were taking up medical courses in a local tertiary school where this author is working. Among the 24 students, only one was the newly enrolled student in Spanish 2 for school year 2018-2019. The rest of the students completed Spanish 1 under the author of this present study. Meanwhile, the variables such as age, gender, among others were not treated in this paper. Specifically, the students' Spanish fluency was not also treated because the department does not have any standardized testing method to diagnose their Spanish level. Discretion is left to the teachers alone.

The tests that the students were asked to design were part of the final examination in Spanish 2. The last section of the written test was dubbed as "Creativity Challenge." They were asked to design at least five tests that can be used by the teacher for the next Spanish classes. Of the 19 students, the expected number of tests was 95, but only 77 types were successfully produced because not all students completed the required five test types. It should be worth noting that during the Spanish 1 and 2 classes, this author had exposed these students to different creative tasks and activities, where they could appreciate and be comfortable with Spanish better. Meanwhile, no mobile phones were allowed during the course of the testing time. The students were given two hours to complete the whole tests inside the assigned classroom under the supervision of this teacher-researcher.

A number of caveats, however, have to be noted because of the highly innovative character of the "Creativity Challenge." First, the inclusion of this creation-component in the final exam was a personal and purposeful decision of the researcher, with the idea in mind that students would take the test-creation component seriously because the final examination bears the highest percentage in their final grade in Spanish 2. Second, the course objectives do not mention any creation component

in any summative test. Future researchers may allow their students to carry out any creation-component as a project-based task. Nonetheless, the creation-component was also an attempt to test students' knowledge of and ability to use the target language. Third, the creation component was not for recording purposes, especially that the validity is a criterion in testing. The creation-component was only used as initial insights with regard to students' creativity in test construction, and to test the assumption that the students can be test co-constructors.

After a two-hour final examination, in respect to the student-constructors, the teacher announced that the creation-component part would not be graded. Their tests would be used for the next school year in both Spanish 1 and 2. Fortunately, all of them agreed and expressed that they enjoyed and took the creation challenge very seriously. Almost all of them suggested that for the next Spanish 1 or 2 classes, the teacher should ask the class to bring colored materials so that the students can produce better illustrations.

Although this case is not a traditional practice in testing, the teacher's attempt to determine the students' creativity still concurs with the practice of academic freedom of the teachers, at least within the academic conditions in the Philippines. The teacher did not ask the approval from the head of the department, with the same idea of academic freedom that the teachers enjoy in the Philippines. In fact, the course syllabi in the Philippine universities and the course requirement designed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) remain indicative, not prescriptive.

For the overall language of the tests, the sets of corpus were winnowed to .text format, and were separated based on the languages such as Spanish, English, Tagalog and the possibility of use of other Philippine regional languages/dialects. Based on the segregation generated by Anthony Concordancing Tool (Anthony, 2014), there are only 4 hits of Tagalog lexical items, thus were intentionally excluded in the presentation. Special marks in Spanish such as but not limited to tildes were transformed into normal orthography (e.g. from ñ to n; from é to e), because the Tool does not read words with these special marks. In like manner, proper names were segregated based on their Englishness, Spanish-ness or Filipino-ness, as employed in the context. Although the Philippine names have many Spanish origins (General, 2018; Munalim, 2019a), these proper nouns such as Pedro were classified directly under the Spanish group when these words are part of the English sentences. The same processes were followed in the analysis of the lexical bundles or n-gram of the Spanish and English words. For this analysis, the scrambled letters presented in the puzzle, and the visual or artistic presentations were excluded. The artistic elements were rather presented in the later part of the presentation.

The tests constructed by the students of Spanish as a Foreign Language were automatically subjected to a content analysis (McMullen, 2011; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to look at the patterns of the language ability, exposure, creativity, engagement, and manipulation of a language that is (almost) foreign to them. On the surface, these patterns coursed through content analysis could be easily analyzed even with the absence of inter-coders because the corpus was rather manageable. A descriptive quantitative statistic such as frequency and percentage were computed for the types of directions, test types, the language of the tests, content words, and lexical bundles/n-grams. Qualitative discussion was employed for the analysis of the creative and visual elements of the tests.

Meanwhile, the use of the present tense of the verb in the discussion is purposeful to signal a sense of immediacy and recency. The presence and the absence of Spanish diacritical marks from the original students' constructions, including other ungrammatical constructions are retained verbatim, but are marked with an asterisk.

## 4 Results and discussion

The ensuing sections are presented based on the content analysis of the student-made tests. It is divided in terms of the corpus-driven features of the tests such as (a) the language of the directions, (b) the test types, (c) the language of the tests, (d) the lexical bundles/n-grams, and (e) the artistic, creative, and visual elements.

### 4.1 On test directions

Table 1 shows that the directions of the students' tests are mainly written in English, with a total of 41 hits, accounting for at least 50% of the occurrences of the total directions constructed. Meanwhile, there are 15 tests without directions, which only contain word-level labels. These English labels include: *Crossword Puzzle*, *Identify*, *Jumble Words*, *Match*, *Matching Type*, *Preguntas (Questions)*, *Riddle*, *Translation*, *Verb Conjugations*, *Word Puzzle Search*, and *Word Search*. These tests that the students constructed without directions are rather self-explanatory, perhaps because they are not asked to explicitly state the directions.

**Table 1. Types of directions**

| Sorts of Directions            | Hits | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|------|------------|
| English directions             | 41   | 53.25%     |
| No directions, but with labels | 15   | 19.48%     |
| No directions at all           | 11   | 22.07%     |
| Spanish directions             | 4    | 5.19%      |
| <i>Total</i>                   | 77   | 100.00%    |

The same Table 1 also shows that the number of Spanish directions, on the one hand, plummet to the bottom, with only 4 hits. When the student-test maker is identified, it is found out that these are produced by the top 1 student, Romina (not a real name). She has been consistent with her good performance both in oral and written tests in both subjects, Spanish 1 and 2. It should be also noted that her accent is close to native-like. As recalled, the class is asked to produce five test types. In this case, Romina produces complete and five directions in Spanish. There is only one direction in Spanish written in a label form, that is, "Preguntas." To illustrate:

- a) Identifica las siguientes \*imágenes. (*Identify the following images.*)
- b) Traducir al español. (*Translate into Spanish.*)
- c) Rellene los espacios en blanco. (*Fill in the blanks.*)
- d) Forma un grupo y \*hacer una obra de teatro usando las palabras a continuación. (*Form a group and do a play using the words below.*)

#### 4.2 On test types

Table 2 shows that the students' test types are dominated in terms of translation, matching, puzzle, filling in the blanks, task-based, riddle, descriptive, identification, and scrambled/word search types. These different test types fall under the big umbrellas in language tasks such as "selected response where the test takers choose answers from a number of available options; short response, in which test takers must produce words, phrases, or short sentences to complete the task; and extended response, which requires the production of longer stretches of discourse" (Douglas, 2010, p. 50).

**Table 2. Patterns of test types**

| Sorts of Tests        | Sub-Categories     |                    | Hits | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------|------------|
| Translation           | Word/Phrasal-level |                    | 9    | 18.18%     |
|                       | Sentence-level     |                    | 5    |            |
|                       |                    | English to Spanish | 11   |            |
|                       |                    | Spanish to English | 3    |            |
|                       |                    | Total              | 14   |            |
| Matching type         |                    | English to Spanish | 5    | 16.88%     |
|                       |                    | Spanish to English | 5    |            |
|                       |                    | Visual to Spanish  | 2    |            |
|                       |                    | Mixed              | 1    |            |
|                       |                    | Total              | 13   |            |
| Puzzle                |                    | Spanish            | 5    | 14.28%     |
|                       |                    | English            | 6    |            |
|                       |                    | Total              | 11   |            |
| Filling in the blanks |                    | Word-level         | 5    | 12.98%     |
|                       |                    | Sentence-level     | 5    |            |
|                       |                    | Total              | 10   |            |
| Tasks-based           |                    |                    | 9    | 11.68%     |
| Riddle/Question type  |                    | English            | 3    | 9.09%      |
|                       |                    | Spanish            | 2    |            |
|                       |                    | Visual             | 2    |            |
|                       |                    | Total              | 7    |            |
| Descriptive type      |                    |                    | 6    | 7.79%      |
| Identification        |                    |                    | 4    | 5.94%      |
| Scrambled/Word Search |                    |                    | 3    | 3.89%      |
|                       |                    | Total              | 77   | 100.00%    |

Table 2 shows the domination of translation as a test type, with a total of 14 hits, accounting for 18.18%. These translation test types are most within in word-phrasal-level, and are mostly given in English to be translated into Spanish. Table 3 shows sample tests:

**Table 3. Translation from one language to another**

| English to Spanish                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Spanish to English                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translate the words into Spanish: <i>beautiful, happy, dance, mother, flower.</i></li> <li>Translate in Spanish: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>My friend is Martha.</li> <li>I love to eat pudding.</li> <li>He arrived late in the party.</li> <li>My sister loves to prepare food.</li> <li>Let's go.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Translate into Spanish: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I want to eat fruits.</li> <li>My brother and I love to dance.</li> <li>I want to travel the world.</li> <li>I brought my mother a present.</li> <li>My mother loves to cook.</li> </ol> </li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Translate into English. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Te amo mucho!</li> <li>Tengo que bailar contigo hoy.</li> <li>Es todo para hoy.</li> <li>Yo quiero cantar musica española.</li> <li>Mi amigo necesita una casa.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Translate the words in English: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>gritar</li> <li>llorar</li> <li>preparar</li> <li>el *pajaro</li> <li>mirar</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |

The dominance of translation test type may not be surprising. Its utility in language teaching-learning has been well noted in previous studies and literature (e.g. Dornyei, 2005; Grim, 2010). In fact, many scholars support that translation should be revived and reappraised, reconsidered and reprogrammed in language learning because the use of one or two languages could augment educational outcomes (Krüger, 2012; Newmark, 2007; Walter & Benson, 2012). Likewise, Munali and Lintao's (2017) study reveals that the "sentence level translation and paragraph level translation may facilitate the accuracy of the past tense markers in actual paragraph narrative writing" (p. 20). Auerbach (1993) enumerated that L1 in L2 classrooms can be used positively for classroom management, language analysis, presenting grammar rules, discussing cross-cultural issues, giving instructions or prompts, explaining errors, and checking for comprehension.

Matching test type accounts for 16.88% of the corpus. The matching type from column A to column B, that is, English to Spanish; and Spanish to English share the same hits of 5. There are also two occurrences from visual to Spanish, and one case of mixed languages. Furthermore, the third most dominant test type is the use of puzzle. It has 5 occurrences in Spanish language and 6 occurrences in English language, thus a total of 11 hits (14.28%). Scrambled words or word search is also employed in the student-tests, accounting for 3 hits. By and large, this conveys that the students enjoy and prefer the puzzle as a game type because "gaming use in the classroom serves as edutainment insofar that play a natural human instinct" (Baek, 2010, p. xix). Related to educational tests, this notion supports O'Brien's (2010) assertion that games have educational affordances, which can be integrated in the classroom. To illustrate two samples:

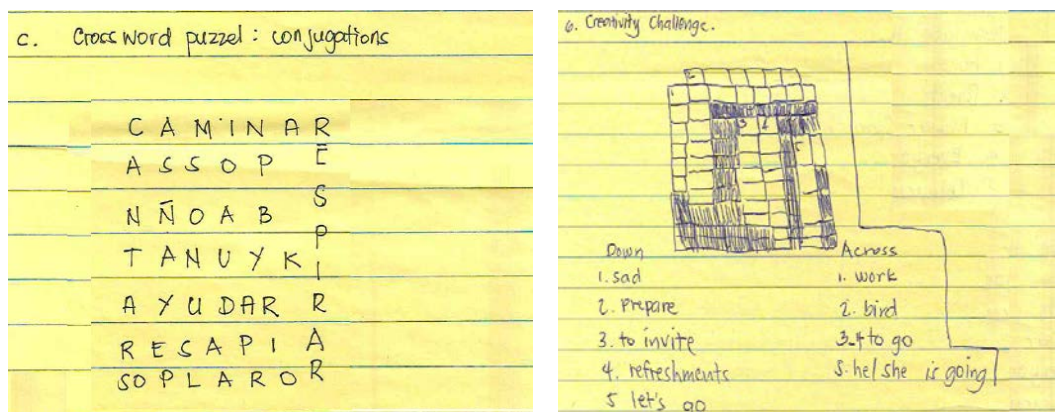


Fig. 1. Martha's puzzle tests

Filling in the blank, on the one hand, accounts for 10 hits, or 12.98%, both shared by word-level and sentence-level. The examples are as follows, where the third bullet is an example of a discourse completion test (DCT):

- Fill in the blanks to complete the sentence.
  1. Mi madre es \_\_\_\_.
  2. Quiero viajar por el \_\_\_\_ con mi familia \*algún \*día.
  3. Mi favorita \_\_\_\_ es rosas.
  4. Quiero visitar a mis \_\_\_\_ en la provincia.
  5. Quiero tener mi propia \_\_\_\_ \*un \*día.
- Complete the sentences:
  1. Estoy \_\_\_\_ con mi familia.
  2. Mi \_\_\_\_ favorito es el \*te helado.
  3. \_\_\_\_ tener mi \*propio piscina.
- Rellene los espacios en blanco:
  1. Hoy, estoy \_\_\_\_.

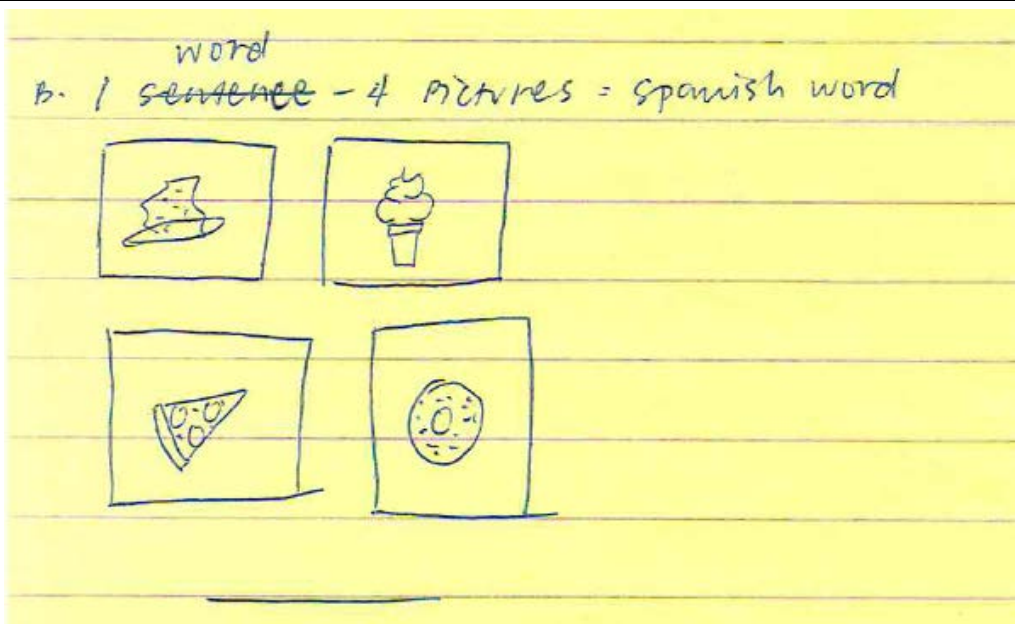
- 2. Quiero como los \_\_\_\_.
- 3. \*Mi novia muy bien \_\_\_\_.

The following examples below illustrate the task-based test types that account 11.68% of the data:

- (a) Make a dialogue in Spanish.
- (b) Draw the following: el pelo, la nariz, los ojos, las orejas, los dientes.
- (c) Create a dialogue about: mother and daughter’s misunderstanding; friendship; and studying Spanish.
- (d) \*Formar un grupo y \*hacer una obra de teatro usando las palabras a continuacion: ayudar, besar, amo, despacito, respirar, \*corazon, muriendo, llorar.

Moreover, riddles account for 7 hits or 9.09%, with a mix of Spanish, English, and visual sorts. It should be noted that the visual type is intentionally sorted for this group, as it intends to allow the test takers to guess the answer.

Table 4. Sample of riddles/question type

| Spanish Riddle/Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | English Riddle/Question                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Give what is asked?<br>(a) Todos tienen esto.<br>(b) Llorar, *sonreir, reir, leche, cargar. *Quien soy?<br>(c) Algo dulce, sabroso, oscuro, redondo, o cuadrado, amo por muchos. *Que es?<br>(d) Yo soy la *ruiz, tu eres la fruta, tengo una barba blanca como la nieve. *Quien soy?<br>(e) A veces, dulce o omargo, amor por los niños. *Que es? | Answer the English riddles in Spanish.<br>(a) I am tall when I am young and I am short when I am old. What am I?<br>(b) What has hands but cannot clap?<br>(c) What is at the end of a rainbow?<br>(d) *How many months have 28 days? |
| Visual Sort                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

There are also tests written in a descriptive type. As noted in Table 1, there are 17 tests without directions. A number of six (6) tests are written in a description type. These are produced by two



students, Abby and Lisa (not their real names). In an assessment of Abby's performance since Spanish 1, she has been performing the lowest, both in writing and speaking performances. She resorts to using her mobile English-Spanish dictionary for some help. Her conjugations of Spanish words, which are basic in Spanish learning, have been erroneously formed, even with a number of speaking and writing tasks, including board drills and video recordings. The first five tests below are Abby's works, while the last one is Lisa's.

- Test I. I will ask the students to draw and express what they want and explain it in Spanish.
- Test II. There will be a pile of cups, 6 cups with Spanish questions. Each of the members has a chance to shoot a cups\* with a ping-pong balls and they will be answering the question. The first to finish is the winner.
- Test III. It's same with "Pinoy Henyo" but with a twist. Each has a category like animals and places. The other partner has a Spanish word on his/her head, and she/he will try to guess it, but the other partner answers his/her question with\* English/Tagalog.
- Test IV. Word Search: They will have a pile of boxes. They have to fill in but don't worry, there are clues under but, to be able to get the clue, you\* have to go through a challenge. "Guess the taste" challenge. Each of the participants will be blind folded and they will eat something sour, sweet, salty, spicy, etc. and they will try to know what it is.
- Test V. Tap guess! The two participants will go through a guessing game.
- Charade Language (Spanish): The players have to "act out" the word or phrase without speaking while the other members of the team try to guess what the word or phrase is. The objective is for the team to guess the phrase as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, as stated in Test III under a descriptive type, the student mentions "Pinoy Henyo" (Filipino Genius). This is a type of game played in "Eat Bulaga," the longest-running noontime show in the Philippines aired on GMA-7. The noontime show has been a TV habit among the Filipinos worldwide since 1979, thus spanning about 40 years on Philippine television. What this student's test conveys is the fact that language and culture co-evolve, especially that the Philippines is a multicultural country (cf. Kachru, 1999; Munalim, 2019c). The student's test is a manifestation that learning a foreign or a second language is made fun by accommodating local conditions and cultures to make learning much more comprehensible.

Thus, it is not impossible that these students have been influenced by their teacher's test types, and the degree to which these types of tests are used both in speaking, listening, and writing performances. Their exposure to the different test types in other courses must have also hastened the constructions of these test types. For example, an expression "Tengo que bailar contigo hoy" used by a student actually comes from the lyrics of the Spanish song, "Despacito" by Luis Fonsi, which they had to sing in class. Other Spanish lexical items also come from the lyrics of the songs by Thalía, a famous Mexican singer.

By and large, these test types delineate the types of tests that their Spanish teacher constructed for them. These types do not deviate from the usual test types in traditional testing such as gap-filling; short answer questions; cloze tasks; and C-test (test takers complete words in a text, every other word showing only at the beginning half of the word); extended response tasks, which require the test takers to produce written or spoken discourse longer than a single phrase or sentence such as essays (Bachman, 1995; Cheng & Fox, 2017; Douglas, 2010).

#### 4.3 *On the language of the tests*

As generated by AntConc (2014), the overall language of the students' tests as shown in Table 5 is dominantly English. This result echoes the same result with the language of the directions, as presented earlier. In fact, the word types from the English cohort account for 55.02% as compared to 44.36% of the Spanish cohort. The word tokens from the English cohort are much higher than the Spanish group, accounting for 63.46% and 36.21%, respectively.

Table 5. Preferences of languages in the tests

| Preferred Languages | Hits         |               |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
|                     | Word Types   | Word Tokens   |
| English             | 351 (55.02%) | 1141 (63.46%) |
| Spanish             | 283 (44.36%) | 651 (36.21%)  |
| Tagalog             | 4 (0.63)     | 6 (0.33%)     |
| Total               | 638          | 1,798         |

These lexical items from both the English and Spanish groups are further classified into three major content words such as a noun, a verb, and an adjective. Table 6 divulges that *nombre* (name) is the most frequent word from the Spanish cohort. The dominant Spanish verbs in the second column are seen to be the commonest Spanish verbs when one teaches or learns Spanish verb conjugations. These Spanish verbs have been widely used by this author in Spanish verb conjugations drills, both in Spanish 1 and Spanish 2. When students are also asked to choose some verbs for conjugations, the verbs *cantar* (to sing), *quiero* (I like), *escuchar* (to listen), *bailar* (to dance), *buscar* (to look for), *comprar* (to buy/shop), and *llorar* (to cry) are the commonest choices. Among these seven commonest Spanish verbs, only 1 verb, that is, *quiero* (I love), has been conjugated to *yo* (first-person I) form. Lastly, the Spanish adjectives such as *feliz* (happy), *buen* (good), and *pobre* (poor) are also the top words used in Spanish 1 and 2. These top three Spanish adjectives are also widely used in the Philippine speech communities, from the regional to the national level.

Table 6. Common Spanish and English content words

| Spanish    |              |            | English      |                |            |
|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|----------------|------------|
| Nouns      | Verbs        | Adjectives | Nouns        | Verbs          | Adjectives |
| nombre (7) | cantar (10)  | feliz (6)  | Spanish (28) | fill (13)      | happy (9)  |
|            | quiero (9)   | buen (5)   | words (17)   | translate (13) | busy (7)   |
|            | escuchar (8) | pobre (5)  | word (10)    | go (9)         | sad (5)    |
|            | bailar (6)   |            | blanks (7)   | look (9)       |            |
|            | buscar (6)   |            | column (6)   | eat (7)        |            |
|            | comprar (6)  |            | mother (6)   | listen (7)     |            |
|            | llorar (5)   |            | activity (5) | match (7)      |            |
|            |              |            | boxes (5)    | answer (6)     |            |
|            |              |            | English (5)  | guess (6)      |            |
|            |              |            |              | prepare (6)    |            |
|            |              |            |              | arrive (5)     |            |
|            |              |            |              | buy (5)        |            |
|            |              |            |              | help (5)       |            |
|            |              |            |              | sing (5)       |            |

\*Frequency is brackets

The same pattern of the commonality of words is noted in the English group. The words under the noun, verb, and adjective columns are rather basic. These contents both from the Spanish and English groups basically fall under Tier 1 in Beck, McKeown, and Kucan’s (2002) “Three Tiers of Words.” Accordingly, words under Tier 1 are generally known by average third graders, such as *happy* and *go*. Words under Tier 2 are important academic success words such as *fortunate* and *ridiculous*; and lastly, Tier 3 includes rare words usually used in content-area related disciplines, such as *isotope* and *estuary*.

4.4 On lexical bundles/n-grams

Table 7 presents the high frequency Spanish and English lexical bundles or n-grams, only about three and four-word bundles, as these strings of words are the most researched bundle sizes (cf.

Cortes, 2004). From the Spanish group, it turns out that the *mi nombre es* (my name is) immediate constituency has dominated in the corpus. Lexical bundles as a multi-word expression (cf. Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Hyland, 2008) are believed to have contributed to fluent and successful linguistic production, both in second and foreign language learning. The rest of the three-to-four-level Spanish lexical bundles are also predictable. These lexical bundles are used in interrogative utterances: *cuál es el* (What is the); *cuál es el nombre* (what is his name); *de donde eres* (where are you from); *el nombre del* (the name of); *es el nombre* (is the name); *es el nombre del* (is the name of); *hola, mi nombre* (hi, my name); and *hola mi nombre es* (hello, my name is). The English lexical bundles, on the one hand, are also mostly used for English directions. As stated in pattern of test types, the fourth dominant test type is filling in the blanks. The n-grams such as “fill in the,” “fill in the blanks,” “in the blanks,” among others, will attest to this pattern.

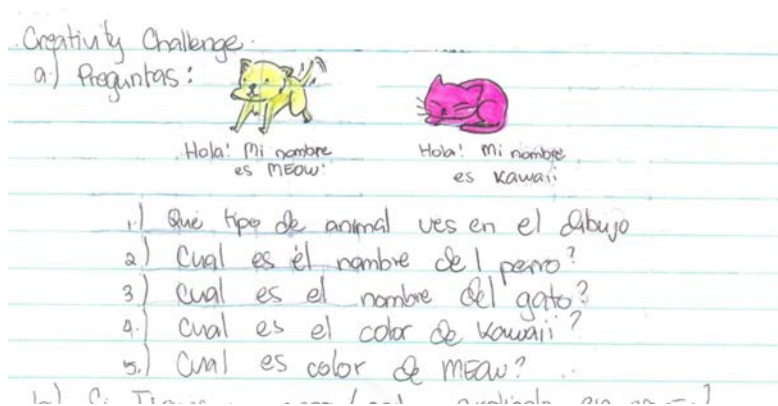
**Table 7. Hits of Spanish and English lexical bundles/n-grams**

| Spanish n-grams       | English n-grams         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| mi nombre es (4)      | fill in the (10)        |
| cuál es el (3)        | fill in the blanks (7)  |
| cuál es el nombre (2) | in the blanks (7)       |
| de donde eres (2)     | translate the words (4) |
| el nombre del (2)     | words in Spanish (4)    |
| es el nombre (2)      | fill in the boxes (3)   |
| es el nombre del (2)  | I love to (3)           |
| hola mi nombre (2)    | in the boxes (3)        |
| hola mi nombre es (2) | let us go (3)           |
|                       | match the following (3) |
|                       | the following words (3) |
|                       | who am I (3)            |

\*Frequency in brackets

#### 4.5 On the artistic dimension

Even with the students' limited time in this creation-component task, many of them have exhibited their creative sides. From the humanistic point of view, Harari (2017) asserts that human beings have the most authentic selves, and their feelings are the wellspring of both the artistic creation and the aesthetic value. Furthermore, students themselves have sets of multiple intelligence at their disposal (Gardner, 2011). In this creativity challenge, the students are able to show off their artistic potentials, which need to be tapped in language test constructions. For instance, Fleetham (2006) puts forth that multiple intelligences can be used to “personalize learning for” (cf. p. 10) the students. The samples are as follows:



**Fig. 2. Ricardo's test type**

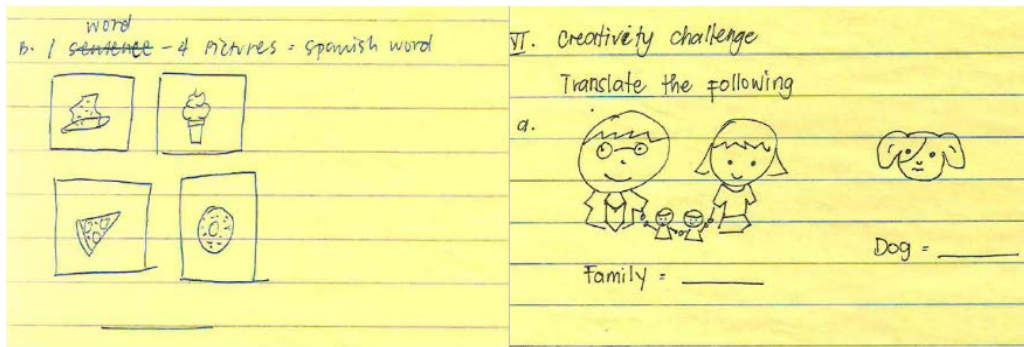


Fig. 3. Marthas' test type

## 5 Conclusion

With the limited corpus in this exploratory paper, we are able to see the creativity of the students, which concerns their own learning of the Spanish language. Their creativity is made salient from the patterns of the directions; the test types; the language of the tests; the lexical bundles/n-grams; and the visual and artistic domains of the tests constructed. Specifically, the test types constructed by the students do not deflect from the usual test types given by the teachers. These results may be predictable because “with creativity we start with what already exists” (Adair, 2007, p. 8). It is possible, at the same time, that the production of these test types have been precipitated by their prior knowledge of test types from the different courses and teachers, including the language input that has been introduced to them in Spanish 1 and 2. While this is the case, the results have proffered important insights into the way these students have demonstrated engagement with the Spanish lessons, both in Spanish 1 and 2, which lasted for 10 months. They have initially provided a way of accounting for the students’ preferences, interaction and engagement with Spanish as a foreign language, thus the possibility for teachers to make informed decisions on teacher-student collaboration in test constructions.

This exploratory study is not without limitations. The corpus is very limited, has not even reached the minimum 200,000 words (cf. Baker, 2006). This is only one of the many limitations inherent in this exploratory paper. They are, of course, acknowledged. For this reason, it is difficult by this time to make any conclusive claims about the strong pragmatic use of teacher-student, co-constructed or collaborative tests. Further studies need to establish and support that co-constructed tests are sound, practical, useful, and helpful in the teaching-learning process.

Even at the exploratory stage of this paper, nevertheless, it has still provided implications and a desideratum of research trajectories. First, the results are not a complete account of students’ preferences, the amount, and the levels of Spanish exposure and creativity, but may have provided us good insights about how teachers can retain, modify and change their authoritative test types (cf. Shohamy, 2006). Students’ linguistic circumstances can be the language teachers’ many options to choose from when designing the tests. They may not “monopolize” test constructions. As Douglas (2010) has asserted, “tests allow us to get a ‘second opinion’ about our students’ progress – they can help confirm our own assessments and help us make decisions about students’ needs with more confidence” (p. 1).

Second, teachers should communicate with the students about what they feel (cf. Cheng & Fox, 2017) about the possibility of teacher-student collaboration in test constructions. Teachers should also be engaging in reflection practices and introspection (e.g. Munalim, 2017b; Munalim & Gonong, 2019) such as: (a) What do my students feel if their tests are used in actual tests for the whole class? (b) Will my students get better scores if their actual test types are used in formative and summative tests? These questions should be applied by interviewing the students, and subsequently use the student-made tests in actual testing. Crucial implications for the interpretation

of test results when tests are teacher-constructed, student-constructed, or both teacher-student constructed are worthy of consideration.

Another way forward in research in teacher-student co-constructed tests is tapping any students with inherent talents in visual designing. In the university level, students majoring in fine arts and designs, and related courses can work in tandem with the teachers. Students in the secondary and K-11 and K-12 level can be tapped. For instance, Arts and Design Track with Visual Arts and Multimedia Arts are offered in the K-12 Philippine curriculum (Department of Education, Philippines, 2013). Thus, collaboration can increase students' agency, allowing them for a joint responsibility with their teachers through the use of a range of creative and artistic strategies.

It is hoped that, somehow, this exploratory paper has given a base study on the possibility of tapping students as test makers and/or test collaborators in the future, not only in a Spanish or any language class, but also in other disciplines where testing is a common, a ubiquitous and a predictable social practice. Teachers should go beyond and to reach out to the students and their creativity and preferences, rather than considering testing inside the remit of the teachers' personal, professional, and powerful expertise. This may not be considered as a crossover from the traditional testing, or a fringe type of language testing, but seen more as a humanistic and social side in (language) testing, which will eventually set-up a "low affective filter" second and foreign language classroom.

## Notes

1. Tests/exams are used interchangeably.
2. Teacher-student collaboration and co-construction are used interchangeably.

## References

- Adair, J. (2007). *The art of creative thinking: How to be innovative and develop great ideas*. London: Kogan Page.
- Alderson, C., Clapham, C., & Wall, D. (1995). *Language test construction and evaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Anthony, L. (2014). AntConc (Version 3.4.4w) [Computer software]. Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net>
- Assaf, L.C. (2008). Professional identity of a reading teacher: Responding to high-stakes testing pressures. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 14, 239–252.
- Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27(1), 9–32.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman, L.F. (1995). *Fundamental considerations in language testing* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Baek, Y.K. (Ed.). (2010). *Gaming for classroom-based learning: Digital role playing as a motivator of study*. New York: Information Science Reference.
- Baker, P. (2006). *Using corpora in discourse analysis*. New York: Continuum.
- Beck, I.L., McKeown, M., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Choosing words to teach*. In *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (pp. 15–30). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Benesch, S. (2012). *Considering emotions in critical English language teaching: Theories and praxis*. New York: Routledge.
- Benesch, S. (2017). *Emotions and English language teaching: Exploring teachers' emotion labor*. New York: Routledge.
- Biber, D., & Barbieri, F. (2007). Lexical bundles in university spoken and written registers. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(3), 263–286.
- Cheng, L., & Fox, J. (2017). *Assessment in the language classroom*. London: Palgrave.
- Cortes, V. (2004). Lexical bundles in published and student disciplinary writing: Examples from history and biology. *English for Specific Purposes*, 23, 397–423.
- Department of Education (DepEd, Philippines). (2013). Arts and design track. Available on [www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Arts-and-Design\\_Apprenticeship-and-Exploration-in-Arts-Production-Media-Arts-and-Visual-Arts\\_1.pdf](http://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Arts-and-Design_Apprenticeship-and-Exploration-in-Arts-Production-Media-Arts-and-Visual-Arts_1.pdf)
- Dewaele, J.M. (2017). Psychological dimensions and foreign language anxiety. In Loewen, S. & Masatoshi, S. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition* (pp. 433–450). New York: Routledge.

- Dornyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Douglas, D. (2010). *Understanding language testing*. London: Routledge.
- Fleetham, M. (2006). *Multiple intelligence in practice: Enhancing self-esteem and learning in the classroom*. London: Network Continuum Education.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- General, Jo.L.O. (2018). Why PH Youth should embrace Spanish. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 7 July 2018. Accessed 21 September 2018. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/114425/ph-youth-embrace-spanish>. Web.
- Grim, F. (2010). L1 in the L2 classroom at the secondary and college levels: A comparison of functions and use by teachers. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 7(2), 193–209.
- Harari, Y.N. (2017). *Homo deus: A brief history of tomorrow*. New York: Harper.
- Hyland, K. (2008). As can be seen: Lexical bundles and disciplinary variation. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(1), 4–21.
- Kachru, Y. (1999). Culture, context and writing. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 75–89). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Knoch, U., & Macqueen, S. (2017). Assessment in the L2 classroom. In Loewen, S. & Masatoshi, S (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition* (pp. 181–202). New York: Routledge.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Krüger, R. (2012). Working with corpora in the translation classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 2(4), 505–525.
- Lewkowicz, J. A. (2000). Authenticity in language testing: some outstanding questions. *Language Testing*, 17(1), 43–64.
- Loh, C.E., & Liew, M. (2016). Voices from the ground: The emotional labour of English teachers' work. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 267–278.
- McMullen, L.H. (2011). A discursive analysis of Teresa's protocol: Enhancing oneself, diminishing others. In F.J. Wertz et al. (Eds.), *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and intuitive inquiry* (pp. 205–223).
- McNamara, T., & Roever, C. (2006). *Language testing: The social dimension*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Munalim, L.O. (2019a, July 7). Learning Spanish can be a walk in the park. *The Bohol Times*, pp. 5/14/16.
- Munalim, L.O. (2017b). Mental processes in teachers' reflection papers: A transitivity analysis in Systemic Functional Linguistics. *3L-Language, Linguistics, and Literature: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 23(2), 154–166.
- Munalim, L.O. (2019c). Micro and macro practices of multicultural education in a Philippine university: Is it global integration ready? *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-019-00497-7>
- Munalim, L.O., & Gonong, G.O. (2019). Stances in student-teachers' spoken reflection: A linguistic analysis to enhance a reflection model. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 7(1), 119–139.
- Munalim, L.O., & Lintao, R.B. (2017). Accuracy of past tense in four tasks: Does translation facilitate narrative writing? *Association of Southeast Asian Teacher Education Network (AsTEN): Journal of Teacher Education*, 2(1), 10–26.
- Newmark, P. (2007). A new theory of translation. *BRNO Studies in English*, 33, 101–114.
- O' Brien, D. (2010). A taxonomy of educational games. In Baek, Y.K. (Eds.), *Gaming for classroom-based learning: Digital role playing as a motivator of study* (pp. 1–23). New York: Information Science Reference.
- Shohamy, E. (2001). *The power of tests: A critical perspective on the uses of language tests*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches*. London: Routledge.
- Sorensen, C. W. (1994). Success and education in South Korea. *Comparative Education Review*, 38(1), 10–35.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tsagari, D., & Csépes, I. (Eds.). (2012). *Collaboration in language testing and assessment*. Frankfurt am Main: Pater Lang.
- Walter, S.K., & Benson, C. (2012). Language policy and medium of instruction in formal education. In Spolsky, B. (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 278–300). London: Cambridge University Press.